

ADDRESS, GRADUATION EXERCISES OF THE BALTIMORE
CITY POLICE – MERGENTHALER-VOCATIONAL
HIGH SCHOOL – BALTIMORE

January 28, 1961

I am most grateful to your Police Commissioner for inviting me to attend these exercises marking the completion of your work as students of the Police Academy and the beginning of your active careers as law enforcement officers in this great city.

I know something of the high standards of instruction that are maintained by this training institution, and I congratulate all of you for having met with success in this first test of your capacity to serve in the exacting role of a police officer. The training you have received will be of great benefit to you as you pursue your new careers. The precepts laid down for you to follow will guide you to the success I know you all aspire to.

It is not without significance, I think, that in the colloquial language of the people, police officers often are referred to as "the law." For it is the experience of many people that their contacts with you become their closest connection with the law. In a very real sense, therefore, you represent to them the authority of their government.

The badge and the uniform you wear are symbols of the dignity and the solemnity of the law. This fact imposes upon you a very serious responsibility, requiring you at all times to conduct yourselves in such a way as to reflect credit and honor upon these symbols of authority. In such a situation, personal misconduct would bring disgrace not only upon yourselves but dishonor upon your city and your state.

I know none of you want that.

On the other hand, your success will bring credit to yourselves, to your family and friends, to those who are associated with you in your calling and to the city whose citizens you have sworn to protect.

We may say, therefore, that you have chosen an arduous career—a career which requires extraordinary courage, physical and moral. It is also an honorable occupation, carrying with it the prestige of the sovereign State which you represent. And it is a responsible occupation, for it imposes upon you the grave duty of keeping the peace of the community, of protecting its citizens in their lives and property and of enforcing the laws enacted for the welfare of these citizens.